2:Emeneau L-5 (1936-1937) 1938
AW5 Coorg AW5

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Kinship and marriage among the Coorgs.[1]

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(*Communicated by Dr. B. S. Guha.*)

The Coorgs are an endogamous community of about 40,000 people who form approximately a quarter of the population of the province of Coorg, which lies in the mountains of western South India between Mysore State and British Malabar. They were originally the warrior owners of this tract and formed, and still form, the highest community in the social scale there (barring the few Brahmans who live in the province). It is doubtful how far they can be considered a caste in any strict Indian sense of the word, for they resolutely refuse to accept the ministrations of the Brahmans in any of their rites. No accurate ethnological account of these people has yet appeared. This paper gives a description of the marriage rites and the kinship system of those Coorgs who live in the central portion of the province, i.e. in Mercara and Virajpet and the district between these two towns and in Nalknad to the west; how far, if at all, the northern and southern extremities of the province present differences of detail is not known.

Kinship organization among the Coorgs takes the form essentially of father-sibs. Each sib (called oka) is marked as such by its name, which is borne by each member as his or her first name. All land is owned ideally, and a great part of it actually, by the sib as such and not by the individual; departures from this ownership system, whereby an individual by his own initiative or good fortune and without depending on the sib property acquires property which he holds as an individual, do not affect his position with regard to the sib property nor do they give the other sib-members a claim upon his individual property. In other words, individual ownership of land is an excrescence upon the traditional sib-ownership. It is the sib, moreover, that

[1] This paper represents part of the work done in 1936-37 during my tenure of a grant from the Penrose Fund of the American Philosophical Society. The phonetic writing used is in general that of the IPA. ə is the back, mid, unrounded vowel; c and j are palatal affricates, y is practically the English y. I write a subscript n at the end of a word to denote that the whole word is nasalized; e.g. in maːvn, both the vowels and v are nasalized. The nasalization is best evaluated phonemically as a feature of the whole word and not of any separate vocalic or consonantal phoneme. When a suffix is added or the word becomes a member of a compound (e.g. in tamma: viⁿ), the nasalization does not extend beyond the limits of the simplex.

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AWS Coorg AWS

Physical and Mental Characters

The Coorgs are a hardy race. They have given proof of being brave soldiers and were much dreaded for their fierce intrepedity in encounters with their enemies. Military officers have commended their fitness for the formation of regiments. They are tall, muscular, broad-chested, strong limbed, and swift footed. Their colour is lighter than might be expected in this latitude. Their features are regular, often distinguished by an aquiline nose, and finely chiselled lips, set off by a well trimmed moustache. According to Holland, the Coorg is taller than the Yerava, has a finer nose, a larger head with a distinct tendency to brachycephalism, and a more perfect approach to orthognathism. Apart from anthropometric results, we have the contrast of colour between the fair (light brown) Coorg and the very dark skinned Yerava. The hair of the former is straight, while that of the Yerava is distinctly wavy, and the broad nose of the latter is accompanied by thick, slightly everted lips. The Coorgs and the Yeravas belong to two distinct ethnic types. The maximum, the minimum, and the average stature, cephalic and nasal indices are given below:

	Stature		Cephalic Index		Nasal Index	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Max.	184.5	166.0	90.7	93.2	100.0	74.0
Min.	149.1	131.5	66.5	70.9	46.3	50.9
Avg.	167.1	151 2	80.6	82.9	65.2	60.3

The intellectual and moral faculties of the Coorgs have been for ages dormant for want of opportunities. Consequently they have been observed to be ignorant and superstitious in common with people of lower cultures. The march of civilization during the last 50 years has brought considerable improvement. English schools for boys and girls have been started in important centres. It has been found that Coorg students are by no means backward in intellectual brightness and acquisitiveness. They have a high standard of morality in common with their brethren in other parts of India.

Language

Richter believes that there is a close relationship between the Kodagu and other Dravidian languages; but being neither cultivated beyond its colloquial use, nor possessing any original literature, it hardly deserves the distinction of being elevated into a special Dravidian language, as Bishop Caldwell does. It may be considered a more local dialect.

Conclusion

The Coorgs numbered 41,026 in the Census of 1931, 20,752 being males and 20,274 females. Their mode of life and pride of race impart to their whole bearing an air of manly independence and dignified self-assertion.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

16
634

Localities.	Births in 1869-70	Deaths in 1869-70	Population on 31st March 1870
Mercara taluq	200	263	11,697
Padinalknád taluq . .	598	460	20,303
Yedenalknád taluq . .	373	219	14,153
Kiggatnád taluq . . .	529	263	17,774
Nanjarájpatna taluq .	471	388	23,163
Yélusávirashíme taluq	392	348	18,979
Mahadeopet or Mercara	149	119	3,859
Virajenderpet	12	58	3,024
Total.	2,724	2,118	112,952

162 Separating the Coorgs from the Hindoos and classifying the remainder of the inhabitants according to their religion, the distribution of the above population stands thus:

Coorgs	24,585
Hindoos	80,934
Mahomedans	5,774
Christians	1,659
Total.	112,952

•161 648 It is said, that before the time of the tyrannical Mahomedan despots in Mysore, Coorg was much more densely inhabited. During 1760 and 1799 more than half of its population either perished or was carried away into captivity and after the fall of Seringapatam but a small part of the exculants returned to Coorg. This statement is corroborated by the fact, that in the Southeast of Coorg there are still many deserted farms grown over with dense jungle, and there are here and there traces of former villages and little towns. The Coorg tribe which in the time of the Rajahs scarcely numbered more than 5000

7/6 [Errata: This should read "exiles" See corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 493 -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AWS Coorg AWS

or 6000 armed men, has during the long period of peace and prosperity under the British Government considerably increased and may now be estimated at about 30,000 souls.

2. PERSONAL APPEARANCE, OCCUPATION AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE COORGS.

The Coorgs, or Kodagas as they are properly called, are the principal tribe of the country and from time immemorial the lords of the soil. For the last two centuries they are known as a compact body of mountaineers who resemble more a Scotch clan than a Hindu caste. In the Hindu scale they are Sudras and not pork-eating "Bastard Kchetrias," as some mocking Brahmins would have it; but it ought to be the pride of the Coorgs to discard the notion of caste altogether, which in fact does not apply to them, and to stand upon their own merits as "Kodagas", the remarkable mountain clan of Coorg. Reserving an enquiry into their origin for the historical part, I would only remark, that the Coorgs of the present day are as distinct from the Malayálam and Canarese people on the western coast, as they are from the Mysoreans in the north and east, though their peculiarities are to some extent allied to the habits of the one as well as to those of the other race, and even their language is but a mixture of the Dravidian tongues.

Look at a group of Coorgs of the better class by the side of some Mysoreans or people from the western coast. The difference is striking. The Coorgs are tall, muscular, broad chested, strong limbed and swift-footed. Men of 6 feet and above are not uncommon. Their features are regular, often distinguished by an aquiline nose and finely chiselled lips set off by a well trimmed mustache which in the "gala-mishe" terminates in a broad volute as worn by their Rajahs and men

6:Spate N-4 (no date)1954 AW1 India
Kanada AW10
Coorg AW5
Tamil AW16

[Fig. 125 (a)] GHATS SECTION

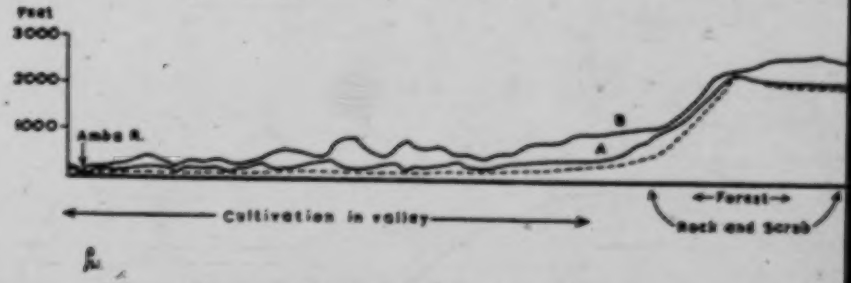

Fig. 125.—Section across the Ghats. The scarp is here 32 mls WNW of Poona. S interfluve 1 ml N of A; C, crest of spur between Paune R. and Lonavla. Note that Paune from SOI 47F/6; vertical exaggtn 2·1.

station at 4000–5000 ft, used by Bombay officials. Its excessive rainfall (260 ins.) gives it a short season; Panchgani, only 12 miles E, receives no more than 60 ins. and has a less fluctuating population, receiving not only some of the hot-weather exodus from the plains, but a rains exodus from Mahabaleshwar itself.

Farther S the dissected belt is higher and wider in the coulisses of Coorg, around the Cauvery headwaters; some points in the girdle of ranges on the N, W, and S reach over 5500 ft. Most of Coorg was originally evergreen forest and bamboo jungle, with some parkland to the E. The average annual temperature is only 60° F., humidity high, rainfall at the capital, Mercara, 133 ins. Of the million acres of Coorg a third are forested and nearly a third cultivated, though of that about half is generally fallow. Rice accounts for 56% of the cropped area, coffee about 30%. The little State (1593 sq mls, 1951 poptn 229,405) is inhabited by a remarkably sturdy peasantry, with their own language (Kodalu): isolated, perhaps fortunately, from the main currents of Indian life, they half-cultivate half-gather cardamoms, collect wax and honey, and hunt, to supplement the product of their paddy-fields: it is typical that even the backbreaking labour of transplanting paddy seedlings ends in a race.[1] The Wynaad Plateau links Coorg with the great boss of the Nilgiris; the tea and coffee plantations of the plateaus extend down the slopes into Malabar, where Mangalore and Calicut are the main outlets.

The Southern Blocks

On either side the Palghat Gap is dominated by the highest mountains of the Peninsula, Nilgiris to the N and the Anaimalai-Palni-Cardamoms

[1] For a full and interesting, if disjointed, account of Coorg see L. A. Krishna Iyer, "Coorg Ethnology" (*JG*) XXII (1947), 157–225).